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DE RUEHAM #2582 2481355
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3466
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0674

UNCLAS AMMAN 002582

SIPDIS

Department for NEA/ELA and PRM/ANE

E.O. 12958: DECL: N/A

TAGS: PREF EAID JO

SUBJECT: IRAQI REFUGEES GAIN ACCESS TO JORDANIAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

¶1. On August 31, 2008, representatives of USAID met together with UNHCR, UNICEF, the European Commission, and the Jordanian Ministries of Education and Finance to discuss education programs for Iraqi refugees. Dr. Akour, Director of General Education, chaired the meeting.

¶2. The Ministry of Education (MOE) reported that 40,000 students, both Jordanian and foreign, shifted into the public school system this year due to rising tuition costs at private schools. The transfers caused further classroom overcrowding and the need to hold two class sessions at an additional 20 schools this year (making approximately 270 double-shifted schools in the Kingdom). The MOE said it had issued a letter/circular requesting schools to report the number of non-Jordanians enrolled, but could not promise when this data would be available.

¶3. The Donors expressed the desire to support the overall education system, benefiting both Jordanian and Iraqis, and requested a list of priorities and associated costs for external assistance. The donors also urged better reporting on the number of Iraqi beneficiaries.

¶4. The donors indicated their interest in supporting these specific areas:

-- European Commission: School fees and textbooks for Iraqis and Jordanians;

-- UNHCR: School infrastructure (Note: this will require moving to a two-year budget cycle, which UNHCR indicated it was prepared to do; end note.);

-- UNICEF: Operational costs tied to specific double-shifted schools, e.g., teacher salaries, utilities, maintenance, etc.

¶5. Comment: RefCoord will join USAID in a follow-up meeting to coordinate criteria, selection, and process for undertaking school expansion and new school construction programmed through USAID partner CDM International. The donor group also agreed to meet again with the ministries after Ramadan, in the expectation that the MOE would have data on enrollment.